

**Congressman Albio Sires**

**March 9, 2007**

**Opening statement for Subcommittee hearing on Section 8 reform**

Thank you Madame Chairwoman for holding this hearing today. Housing is such a vital, but yet basic human need. And as we talked about during our trip to New Orleans last month, Madame Chairwoman, I am very pleased to be on this subcommittee working to make safe and affordable housing a reality for every American.

The Section 8 Voucher Program in New Jersey helps many families, but many more are in need. Due largely to the flaws in the formula for distributing Section 8 housing voucher funding, the share of vouchers in use in New Jersey has fallen over the past few years, from 96 percent in 2004 to a projected 91 percent in 2006. In other words, 3,197 vouchers have already been cut in New Jersey over the past two or so years. The Section 8 reform bill considered last term would have restored nearly all vouchers in use in New Jersey over the past few years. Overall, 99 percent of New Jersey's currently authorized vouchers would be funded under the formula in that bill. That is good news.

Sadly, though, there is bad news in other federal housing programs. Yesterday I learned that the Jersey City Public Housing Authority will lay off thirty-four employees today because of cuts in the Public Housing Program. They are losing their jobs because public housing programs are under funded and because of regulatory changes initiated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I know we are here today to discuss Section 8 reforms, not Public Housing funding, but the broader network of federal housing assistance is very much on my mind. And I am hopeful that Congress will restore funding in fiscal year 2008 for Public Housing and the agencies that administer it across the country. I also hope that we can reverse restrictive federal regulations so that Public Housing Authorities have the much needed resources to serve every eligible family.

But let me focus again on today's hearing. Today we are going to hear from a distinguished panel of experts with unique perspectives on the Section 8 program. I look forward to learning from each of them. They may know best what reforms are needed to this vital program and I hope that we can use their advice to strengthen this vital program.

Thank you.